MINUTES

New Orleans Regional Planning Commission Freight Roundtable
July 27, 2016 - 8:30 AM
Regional Transportation Management Center
10 Veterans Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70124

Attendees

Bob Schmidt, AECOM (Speaker)
Bruce Lambert, ITTS (Speaker)
Chris McLindon, NOGS (Speaker)
Alejandra Guzman, NOLABA
Andree' Fant, Port of New Orleans
Ben Broyles, Cooper/CTLC
Billy App, J.W Allen
Bruce Lambert, ITTS
Chris Laborde, RPC
Courtney Young, Clean Fuel Partnership
Dean Goodell, LaDOTD
Jeff Roesel, RPC
John Hyatt, The Irwin Brown Co.
K.M. Price, NOT
Kristi App, JW Allen/IFFCBANO
Maggie Woodruff, RPC
Meredith Soniat, RPC
Nicole Rizzo, LaDOTD
Paul Aucoin, Port of South LA
Randall Withers, LaDOTD
Scott Boyle, LaDOTD
Scott Richoux, NOPB
Sean Duffy, LAMA, BRC
Walter Brooks, RPC

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Agenda Item #1- Welcome, Introductions, Call to Order
Jeff Roesel welcomed the group. All previous meeting notes, presentations, and upcoming dates are posted on the RPC's website: www.norpc.org.

Agenda Item #2- April 27, 2016 minutes will be offered for approval
Minutes were approved.

Agenda Item #3- RPC Project Highlight: Earhart-Airline Drive Connector, Bob Schmidt, P.E, PTOE AECOM – PowerPoint presentation attached
An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the Earhart-Airline Drive Connector (highway) evaluation was completed in 2006. Running from Dickory Dr. to I-310 and adjacent to the abandoned KCS railroad, the connector would serve as a dual highway corridor and potential transit route. The project's components include widening Airline Dr. to four lanes, adding a bridge over Dickory Dr., significant drainage improvements, enclosing open canal no. 6 next to Airline Dr. with new box culverts, and aesthetic improvements. The first phase of the project is to create either a six lane bridge or a four lane bridge (over rail tracks) with provision to expand it to 6 lanes in the future to reduce upfront costs. In summary, this complex urban freeway project includes an extension of the Earhart Expressway by 2.3 miles, widening Airline Dr., and constructing a 6-lane elevated structure. It would increase traffic flow and provide better connectivity.

This project would help serve the statewide growth projections of trucks, inbound truck tonnage, instrastate, and through truck traffic. Intermodal facilities (airport and Union Passenger Terminal) will be better connected.

The Avondale Shipyard on the west bank may be redeveloped and currently the Louis Armstrong International Airport terminal (MSY) is being reconfigured and rebuilt. The Earhart-Airline Drive Connector project would tie the Huey P. Long Bridge (near Avondale) to the Earhart Expressway and the new MSY terminal would be directly tied to the Airline Dr. Corridor. In 2005, the total cost of the project was $246 million. Since the EIS was completed 10 years ago, new business owners may not be aware of this project. AECOM will be briefing the business owners.

The Canadian National /Illinois Central (CN/IC) railroad crossing and utility corridor area is one of the biggest challenges of this project due to the high pressure gas lines running parallel and high voltage lines running above. Issues and constraints include: roadway transition to existing Airline, a noise barrier wall, new box culverts for Canal No.6 allowing inclusion of a median on Airline Dr., Lead St. on & off ramps for more connectivity to Elmwood, bridge to ground level transition, bridge structure, displacements, Airline /Little Farms Junction/ Soniat Canal Crossing, and the CN/IC Railroad crossing.

Opportunities include: 50' of additional KCS R-O-W to enable fewer displacements and use as a transit corridor (light rail or BRT) with exclusive bike/ped lanes, a water feature near the Jefferson parish Public Works facility, drainage/stormwater detention, and using Context Sensitive Design.

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A 2011 study also evaluated the potential for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and 10 ft. multi-use paths on both sides of the road. Versus the 50 year box cost estimate, the 10 year box cost estimate would save money. The concept design came from a community engagement process. Bridge sections (height differentiations, materials, shape, etc.) were taken into consideration. The Earhart-Airline Drive Connector (highway) project is expected to be completed and open to traffic in 2022.

Agenda Item #4- If the Unthinkable Happens - An Avulsion of the Mississippi River/Freight Impacts, Bruce Lambert, ITTS and Chris McLindon, NOGS – PowerPoint presentations attached

McLindon presented on the geological history of the MS River stating that, in time, the river will be capable of controlling any system. Floodplains were built by the deltas switching back and forth. The point where they change is called an avulsion, and people can predict where the next avulsion will occur. The conditions for an avulsion include gradient advantage, predetermined course, and a triggering event such as a major flood or earthquake. Each delta has a lifespan. Today, we have remnants left behind of various deltas. Bayou Teche is a remnant of the original MS River delta. Metairie and the Gentilly Ridge are remnants of a line of old Barrier Islands. The Old River site (near the southwest corner of Mississippi and northwest of Tunica, LA) was the first place the MS River changed course and is the most likely place for it to change again. It's also changed course in Donaldsonville and Bayou Lafourche. Land loss today is a continuation of natural cycles. In total, 16 deltas have been built by the river changes to get to present-day Louisiana. A new avulsion has already taken place at Old River, where the MS River connects to the Atchafalaya River, but we are able to control it by constricting flow. McLindon explained the intricacies of the Mississippi, Red, and Atchafalaya rivers from 5000 years BP to 1800 AD. An outflow channel was constructed to allow water flow into and out of the Atchafalaya. A lock & dam and hydroelectric plant were also constructed making the river system 30% maintained and 70% mandated by Congress. The layering of sand changes a rivers course and affects flow. A graphic showed the various environments of river deposition. Undifferentiated sand and gravel are the most abundant, expanding thousands of feet down. Sand is porous and permeable allowing water to seep underground which is not good for the MS River. If an avulsion takes place, one immediate possibility is a major flood. A long-term effect would be losing flow of the river. Things wouldn't filter out which would adversely affect drinking water, plants, and maritime traffic.

Lambert stated that we are seeing more and more "500 year floods," and we're also at the aging design life of infrastructure. He explained the importance of the MS River for commerce and commodities. Louisiana exports more agriculture than it grows and there's 1 million trucks on state roads for soybean alone. Transportation is driven by economies of scale, rates, and reliability. Lambert presented options if an avulsion at the Old River Structure were to occur stating that the US Army Corp. of Engineers could see it as a maintenance and structure failure and just "fix it" or it will be seen as an act of nature which has nothing to do with the structures in place. The latter will get a quicker and better response.

Carriers, shippers, and other agents, including the Coast Guard, State, and Corps, will be most affected and have varying responses. Lambert spoke about economic sense versus contractual sense and how freight could be impacted with the scenario of coal being transported by truck to St. Louis. There needs to be a benefit-cost analysis aside from a project analysis. US Policy, foreign agriculture policies, and

planning strategies need to be discussed *before* the predicted avulsion. Critical factors to consider include drinking water, infrastructure on Atchafalaya, job security, transition of infrastructure, and freight.

Agenda Item #5- Round Robin One Minute Activity Reports (by members)

1. Port NOLA's Truck Replacement Incentive Program (TRIP) will begin in September and provide funding to fleets and individual truck drivers operating on Port property to scrap their old trucks and purchase new, more efficient trucks.
2. LaDOTD's new ramp meters are heavily used by trucks coming from Tchoupitoulas. One issue is that people aren't sure how they work. If the meter is shut off or blank, you can go. The LA Transportation Association may need to send an alert for out-of-town drivers.

Agenda Item #8- Open Discussion/Issues of Concern

None

The next Freight Roundtable meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at the Regional Transportation Management Center, 10 Veterans Blvd. at 8:30 a.m.

Minutes by Courtney Young

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